

## CHAPTER X

### THE PLAN OF OPERATIONS

(Map 3; Sketches A, 11)

TOWARDS the end of June the Government's offer of a fourth reinforcing division enabled Sir Ian Hamilton to amplify very considerably the scheme for the August offensive.

It will be remembered that the first phase of the operations, as proposed by General Birdwood on the 30th May and adopted by the Commander-in-Chief a fortnight later, was to consist of a night advance from Anzac to capture Chunuk Bair; the seizure of Battleship Hill, Baby 700 and 400 Plateau next morning; and the capture—perhaps two days later—of Gun Ridge. While these operations were in progress the Anzac troops would be reinforced as more ground became available; and the second phase would consist of an advance on a broad front to seize a position astride the peninsula from Gaba Tepe to Maidos.

The inherent weakness of this scheme lay in the fact that the success of the whole venture depended upon the success of the first phase, and that, no matter how many troops were available in the Eastern Mediterranean, the numbers that could be employed in that phase were strictly limited by the smallness of the existing Anzac position. Sir Ian Hamilton, with an extra division at his disposal, was naturally anxious to ensure that there should be no lack of strength at the decisive time and place. But all the troops to be used in the first critical phase would have to be landed secretly, and hidden out of sight, before the operations began; and until more ground was gained there was barely standing-room at Anzac for more than six brigades in addition to the existing garrison.

A vital question arose from these considerations. Could General Birdwood complete the first phase with the help of only six additional brigades? <sup>1</sup> In May he had counted to do

<sup>1</sup> To gain General Birdwood's views on this point he was ordered on 25th June to show how he would propose to use a reinforcement of one, two or three divisions and the Indian brigade.

it with four. In early June he had asked for three more as a margin of safety. But six in all was apparently the limit. Moreover, General Birdwood's scheme had been based on the assumption that the battle would be fought in July. After a month's delay the task would be far more difficult, and the Turks were already improving their defences on the Anzac northern flank.

Whatever the answer to this question, it was clear that the whole scheme would be strengthened, and the prospects of success increased, if, simultaneously with the opening of the Anzac battle, a new landing could be effected either north or south of Anzac Cove. In this way the operation could be launched at the outset on a broad front, and the Turks investing the Anzac position could be attacked from outside as well as from within the circle.

South of Anzac the Turkish defences forbade all hope of a landing on either side of Gaba Tepe. The beaches were defended by trenches and wire; they were enfiladed by machine guns; they could be swept by gun fire from the Olive Grove, Gun Ridge and Kilid Bahr Plateau. But in Suvla Bay, rather less than five miles north of Anzac, there were apparently few defences, and there a landing could probably be effected on very easy terms.

Map 3.  
Sketch  
A.

So far as was then known the total number of Turks within thirty miles of Suvla, exclusive of the troops opposing General Birdwood's corps, consisted of only five battalions. The sole defences in the immediate vicinity of the beaches were believed to be small outposts on the two horns of the bay; and of these the position at Lala Baba, on the southern horn, had been successfully raided on several occasions by quite small parties from Anzac. The bay itself and the open plain behind it were dominated on three sides by high ridges—the most distant of which was only four miles from the beach. But once these were occupied, Sir Ian Hamilton would have a sheltered base, secure from enemy shell fire, and would be able to push a force south-eastward through the gap between the two Anafarta villages, five miles distant from Suvla, to come in on the flank of any Turkish force still opposing General Birdwood's advance.

The three ridges which combined to encircle the Suvla area will frequently be mentioned in this narrative. On the north, from Suvla Point to Ejelmer Bay, was the Kiretch Tepe ridge, running along the northern coast, and attaining at Kiretch Tepe a maximum height of 655 feet. This ridge, low and rocky to start with, is clothed with thick scrub further east, and its northern slopes are abrupt. The Telke Tepe ridge, running

south between Ejelmer Bay and the village of Anafarta Sagir is nearly 900 feet high. Its sides are steep but easily climbable, except for the high prickly scrub which densely clothes its sides. In places this scrub—about six to seven feet high—is only passable by way of the narrow goat tracks which zigzag over the hill. From the top of the ridge the broad plains on either side are spread at one's feet like a map.

On the south the Suvla plain is dominated by the Anafarta spur, a long finger-shaped ridge which runs south-west from near Anafarta Sagir. This ridge, about 350 feet high, ends abruptly with a cluster of rugged eminences, in places precipitous, about 300 feet high, known to the British as the W Hills and to the Turks as Ismail Oglu Tepe. A northern offshoot from the W Hills is a low, rounded spur, whose summit, known as Scimitar Hill, was later to become the scene of bitter fighting.

Rising from the plain, midway between the W Hills and Lala Baba, two small isolated hills also claim attention. These two hills, joined by a low neck, were subsequently called Chocolate Hill and Green Hill from their prevailing colours; but before the Suvla landing they were known as "the Chocolate Hills". On the Turkish map they were collectively called Mastan Tepe (Yilghin Burnu). It will be seen on a later page that this indefinite nomenclature caused serious misunderstandings.

It remains to notice here that the Turks had occasionally placed guns on the Chocolate and W Hills to shell the Anzac beaches; that these hills were believed to be defended by trenches and wire against a possible attack from the south and west; and that their northern slopes were said to be undefended. It was reported that there was a small outpost position on Kiretch Tepe, and that the Tekke Tepe ridge was unoccupied. The Turks were believed to be keeping three of their five available battalions near Anafarta Sagir, and to have distributed the remaining two between the Chocolate and W Hills, the outposts on Kiretch Tepe, and the two horns of the bay.

Little was known about Suvla Bay itself, and the chart was old and unreliable. Viewed from the sea the northern shore looked rocky and unsuitable for a landing. The sandy beach below Lala Baba was known to be bounded by low cliffs, which made it equally unsuitable, and the sea near the shore was known to be very shallow. At the eastern end of the bay, however, just north of the "Cut"—a small and apparently dry watercourse connecting the Salt Lake with the bay—there was a long, broad beach, edged by low sand-dunes, which seemed to offer a very easy approach to the Suvla plain. As for the Salt

Lake, it was said to dry up in summer, and viewed from the sea or from the heights at Anzac its gleaming salt-like surface already seemed to be dry.

North of the Salt Lake, which between Lala Baba and the Cut was separated from the bay by a spit of sand-dunes not more than 200 yards wide, the Suvla plain was flat and thirsty looking. It consisted mostly of rough, stony, grazing land, intersected by dry watercourses, and dotted with stunted trees. Farther inland were belts of scrub, thickening as the foot-hills were approached, and here and there a patch of green cultivation amongst the prevalent dusty browns and whites. Beyond this arid plain, ringing it like the rim of a saucer, lay those all-important hills, sun-scorched and quivering in the heat.

South of the Anafarta spur, and between it and the main Sari Bair ridge, which was to be General Birdwood's objective, lay the Azmak Dere valley. It was by this valley that the troops from Suvla would press forward towards Biyuk Anafarta. Here the country was greener and more fertile than in the Suvla plain. It boasted several farmsteads, surrounded by well-grown trees, and according to the Turkish map it was plentifully supplied with wells.

Water at Suvla would obviously be a difficulty at first. A few wells were marked on the map on both horns of the bay; there were a few in the plain, and reports stated that there were good springs on Kiretch Tepe. It was also fairly certain that plenty of water could be found a short distance below the surface. But a full supply would obviously take time to develop, and, if many troops were to land there, they would have to be provided at first with a large emergency supply of sea-borne water.

At the moment when a Suvla landing was being seriously considered at G.H.Q., an opportune report was received from the Anzac corps. A small reconnoitring patrol, led by Lieut. G. R. Blackett of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles, had left Anzac in a trawler on the night of the 20th June, and after landing under the northern slopes of Kiretch Tepe, had boldly crossed the plain to locate the Turkish guns on the W Hills. They had carried out this daring task apparently with complete success,<sup>1</sup> and had then returned to their starting-point, where the trawler picked them up. Lieut. Blackett had found water on Kiretch Tepe,<sup>2</sup> and reported that though Turkish patrols were active, the enemy did not appear to be in any strength to the north of the Anafarta spur.

<sup>1</sup> It is more probable that the guns seen were only dummies.

<sup>2</sup> The Turks had a splendid natural water supply on this ridge.

• Sir Ian Hamilton now called Admiral de Robeck into conference, and suggested the landing of at least one division in Suvla Bay, to synchronize with the launching of General Birdwood's attack. This would enable three new divisions instead of two to be thrown into the fight from the outset and greatly increase the chance of a sweeping success.

Admiral de Robeck took to the scheme at once, especially as some new anti-torpedo nets, which had lately arrived, could protect the bay from German submarines. The necessary small craft for a new landing could be made available, for a number of motor-lighters were coming out from home, and with their help a large body of troops could be thrown ashore far more quickly than in the landings on the 25th April.

These lighters promised to be a godsend. They were large flat-bottomed boats, fitted with oil engines giving them a speed of 5-7 knots; and their sides and decks, plated with  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch steel, were proof against rifle-bullets and shrapnel. They could carry 500 men or 40 horses; they drew seven feet of water aft when loaded; and their bows were fitted with a long ramp, across which, if the beach were "steep-to", the troops could dash ashore almost dryshod. A force landing in this way would still suffer the disadvantages inherent in debouching from any defile—there would still be the neck of the bottle—but the dangerous and defenceless moments inseparable from approaching a hostile shore in open boats would be almost entirely eliminated.

These lighters had originally been conceived by Lord Fisher for use in his projected Baltic scheme,<sup>1</sup> but though some of them were completed in March, Lord Fisher was not prepared to part with them for service at the Dardanelles. One of Sir Ian Hamilton's staff happened to know the secret of their existence, for when serving at the War Office at the beginning of the year he had been sent over to the Admiralty "to give some technical" military advice on a very secret subject". This subject proved to be the design of some motor-lighters for landing gun-teams on the German coast, and on arrival in the First Sea Lord's room the staff officer had been bound to complete and absolute secrecy. In March, however, finding himself connected with another landing scheme, he remembered these lighters, and confided his knowledge to his chief. Sir Ian Hamilton, in an effort to secure these valuable boats without divulging the source of his information, telegraphed to Lord Kitchener that if the Admiralty could improvise and send out quickly some bullet-proof lighters capable of carrying 400-500 men or 40 horses, the difficulty of landing under fire would be

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. page 66.

reduced by at least a half. But the request was unsuccessful. Lord Kitchener replied that "bullet-proof lighters cannot be provided".

It was these lighters which now—three months later—were on passage to the Mediterranean<sup>1</sup>, and the promise of their arrival went far to reduce the anxieties of a new landing. The sailors urged, however, that no landing should be attempted within Suvla Bay, for fear of rocks and shallows; but that the troops should be put ashore to the south of Nibruesi Point, where the beach was known to be admirably suited for a landing on a broad front.<sup>2</sup>

By the 27th June, therefore, Sir Ian Hamilton had decided to include a landing immediately south of Suvla Bay in his main plan for the August offensive; and the hopeful reports from Anzac, the acquiescence of the admiral, and the encouraging hints of still further help<sup>3</sup> from home were filling him with renewed confidence. Telegraphing to Lord Kitchener next day that he would welcome a fifth division, his message ended: "To summarize, I think I have reasonable prospects of eventual success with three divisions; with four the risks of miscalculation would be minimized; and with five, even if the fifth had little or no gun ammunition . . . success could be generally assured."

But so much precious time had already been lost that despite the chance of getting two extra divisions, Sir Ian Hamilton now resolved to start his battle without them. In any case another month must pass before the last of the three divisions already promised could arrive. That in itself was bad enough, and he was anxious to avoid the dangers of any extra delay. Counting the 52nd Division<sup>4</sup> he would have four divisions available for Suvla and Anzac at the beginning of August, in addition to the Anzac corps, and that strength, he believed, would fulfil his immediate needs.

Sir Ian Hamilton determined, therefore, to set the big offensive in motion at the earliest possible moment after the

<sup>1</sup> On arrival in Gallipoli these vessels were given the nickname of "beetles" from the fact that they were painted black and that the projecting arms of their ramps had much the appearance of antennæ.

<sup>2</sup> The flanking destroyers at Anzac had a thorough knowledge of this beach, which was firm sand on a front of over a mile, with deep water within a few feet of the shore. It was fringed with low sand-hills with easy exits to an open plain.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Kitchener had just cabled to ask whether Hamilton considered it "necessary or desirable" that a fifth reinforcing division should be sent him. He added a warning that owing to difficulties of ammunition supply it probably could not be equipped with any guns, and that even the despatch of a fourth division had not yet been definitely decided on.

<sup>4</sup> He had not yet decided to use this division at Helles on 12th July.

arrival of the third New Army division. Two of his four available divisions would be allotted to the Anzac front. The third would carry out the Suvla landing, and would be reinforced next morning by the fourth.<sup>1</sup> The Suvla operations would be entrusted to Sir Frederick Stopford, who was already on the way out from England to command the IX Corps.

The ultimate objective of the combined operations would still be the capture of a position astride the peninsula from Gaba Tepe to the neighbourhood of Kilia Bay.<sup>2</sup> If two extra divisions were sent out from England they would be used, if necessary, to complete the attainment of that objective. But if success in the north had been gained before their arrival, Sir Ian informed Lord Kitchener that he would probably land them on the Asiatic side of the Straits with a view to pushing forward to Chanak and severing what would then be the sole remaining Turkish line of supply to the southern end of the peninsula. Sketch 11.

On the 1st July General Birdwood submitted his suggestions for the employment of one, two, or three reinforcing divisions at Anzac. A month's additional experience of the situation, and the continual strengthening of the Turkish position around him, had led to a few changes in his scheme of the 30th May. He was now of opinion that his aim in the first phase must be to capture not only Chunuk Bair but the whole Sari Bair range as far north as Hill 971.<sup>3</sup> He would also make a point of capturing the Turkish guns on the Chocolate and W Hills, which otherwise might interfere very seriously with his troops on 971. He expected to achieve all these objects, and in addition to capture Battleship Hill, Baby 700 and the whole of 400 Plateau, with a reinforcement of seven

<sup>1</sup> In forwarding the first outline of the military requirements for Suvla to the Admiral, G.H.Q. stated that they would want to land 15,000 men and 16 guns on the beach south of Nibrunesi Point on the night chosen for the attack, to be followed by another 10,000 men (of the 52nd Division) from Helles next morning. They asked how many of the 15,000 could be landed simultaneously in one trip. "The task of the troops", the memorandum added, "will be to act in concert with the troops at Anzac, whose advance must begin not later than 11 P.M., and as simultaneity will be of great importance you will realise how much depends on the speed with which troops can be put on shore." Subsequently these arrangements were altered, and owing to its heavy losses on the 12/13th July, the 52nd Division was not employed in the main battle.

<sup>2</sup> Some of Sir Ian Hamilton's orders and despatches used the expression "Gaba Tepe to Maidos", others "Gaba Tepe to a point north of Maidos". The point actually contemplated at G.H.Q. at this time was the end of the spur which runs from Mal Tepe to the shore north of Kilia Bay. Subsequently General Birdwood suggested as a final objective, the spur further east, which runs down from Hill 820.

<sup>3</sup> Koja Chemen Tepe, the highest point on the ridge.

brigades.<sup>1</sup> But that, apparently, was the utmost that could be done in the first phase, and the capture of Gun Ridge and Gaba Tepe must await the landing of further reinforcements. He did not think that a third division could be landed at Anzac Cove "with any comfort" till Hill 971 had been captured; and the present Anzac base would not be big enough for the number of troops required to complete the attainment of the Gaba Tepe—Maidos line. But he suggested that as soon as Hill 971 was in his possession a third division should be landed either at Anzac, or near Fisherman's Hut, or perhaps in Suvla Bay.

The suggestion that the Anzac base would be too small for the number of troops required was in itself a strong argument in favour of the G.H.Q. plan for a landing in force at Suvla. But a stronger inducement still was that in a later part of his memorandum General Birdwood unexpectedly proposed to capture the Chocolate and W Hills by landing a single brigade at Suvla. Two battalions, his memorandum explained, would probably suffice for this enterprise, but to "make a certainty" of it he intended to land a brigade. As the hills were only entrenches to meet an attack from the south and west, he would land in Suvla Bay and attack them from the north; and "as this is new ground and does not present the difficulties of Sari Bair, the troops employed would be drawn from the reinforcing troops". General Birdwood added that even if he could only be given four brigades in all, instead of seven, he would still detach one of them to effect the Suvla landing and capture the W Hills.

Sir Ian Hamilton now decided that as two divisions of the IX Corps were to land at Suvla the capture of the guns on the Chocolate and W Hills should be undertaken by them as part of their allotted task, thus enabling General Birdwood to devote his whole attention to his own immediate front. In these circumstances it would probably suffice to reinforce Anzac with five infantry brigades in addition to artillery and extra mule transport. On the 2nd July General Birdwood was summoned to G.H.Q. and acquainted with these decisions. He was given an entirely free hand in framing his own plans for the Anzac attack, subject only to Sir Ian's final approval and the navy's ability to carry out their part of the scheme.

The problems—administrative as well as tactical—that now had to be worked out by the Anzac corps staff were very intricate. In the folds of that tiny stretch of barren and waterless hillside

<sup>1</sup> Actually he meant to land 6 brigades at Anzac Cove and the seventh in Suvla Bay.



comprising the Anzac position, no part of which was more than a thousand yards from the enemy's front line, the existing garrison was already in crowded occupation of nearly every available inch of ground that was hidden from Turkish view. Yet, before the operations could begin, another 25,000 men, large numbers of animals, vehicles and guns, and vast quantities of ammunition, stores and supplies, would have to be landed on the crowded and frequently shelled pier, and this without attracting the watchful attention of the enemy. Terraces and dug-outs had to be cut into the hillsides to accommodate the reinforcements, and elaborate arrangements completed for securing a supply of water. Shelters for the various new headquarters had to be constructed and linked up with the existing telephone system. Detailed tables had to be worked out to gauge the number of men, animals and guns that could be landed in a single night; and with the help of these figures, and working backwards from the hour fixed for the opening of the attack, a programme had to be drawn up showing on what night the reinforcements would have to begin arriving and (from a local point of view) the most convenient sequence for their despatch.

While these plans were being beaten into shape at Anzac, many complex problems were being settled at G.H.Q. Detailed arrangements had to be made for accommodating the new divisions on arrival<sup>1</sup> and for all the intricate movements connected with their final deployment for battle. On the administrative side, amongst other pressing matters, urgent steps had to be taken to equip the lines of communication for the enormously increased strain they soon would have to bear. The problems which faced the naval and military staffs at the advanced base at Mudros will be dealt with on another page, but it must here be stated that at the beginning of July the situation at that port was already so nearly out of hand that there was risk of a complete breakdown. On the 9th July, at the urgent request of Sir Ian Hamilton, Major-General E. Altham was ordered out to the Dardanelles as Inspector-

<sup>1</sup> Owing to shortage of water, and the difficulties of loading and unloading animals at Mudros, all the artillery and transport of the new divisions, except water carts and cookers for the infantry, were detained at Alexandria till wanted on the peninsula. Infantry and other dismounted units were mostly disembarked at Mudros and accommodated in tents at Mudros or Imbros. But the water supply at these places was scanty, and six battalions of the 10th Division were sent to Mitylene. The Greek Government, still neutral, were not asked to sanction British use of the island, but were informed that military necessity admitted of no other course. Incidentally the despatch of troops to Mitylene helped to deceive the Turks as to the direction of the new attack.

General of Communications, and pending his arrival Br.-General Hon.<sup>e</sup> H. E. Lawrence, who was known to have wide business experience, was temporarily torn from his infantry brigade to help unravel the knot. From that moment matters began to improve; but the lack of small craft and adequate piers was the main root of the trouble, and General Altham's first telegram to the War Office on the 22nd. July spoke of the "appalling confusion" which still reigned at Mudros.

In one respect only—and that a vital one—Lord Kitchener had been unable to satisfy Sir Ian Hamilton's requirements. Owing to the slow rate of expansion of the munition factories—the total British output at this time was only about 22,000 rounds a day—the fourth and fifth divisions which had now been promised to Gallipoli were not to bring their guns,<sup>1</sup> and Sir Ian was told that it would be impossible to send him all the ammunition he required without reducing the stocks in France below what was necessary even for purposes of defence.

The early days of July, therefore, found Sir Ian Hamilton still anxious on the subject of ammunition supply. In every recent action fought on the peninsula shortage of gun-ammunition, and particularly of high-explosive shell, had sorely handicapped the troops. Generally, it may be said, it had doubled their casualties and sometimes robbed them of victory. The fear that the amounts now promised by the War Office would again prove insufficient was the British commander's bugbear. Hitherto, realizing the War Office's difficulties, and the superior claims of the army in France, he had refrained from pressing for preferential treatment. By this time, however, rumours were accumulating that the situation in France was at a standstill till the autumn. So Sir Ian again returned to the charge on the 13th July and begged that, if these rumours were true, he might be given "a temporary preferential claim" to all the ammunition he wanted. These requirements he placed at the immediate despatch of an extra 15,500 rounds of howitzer high-explosive, and thenceforward a total monthly supply for two months of 400,000 rounds of all calibres. He also asked—and the moderation of the demand makes pitiful reading—for two batteries of 4.5-inch howitzers for the 10th and 11th Divisions—"since" "the 5-inch howitzers are too inaccurate for close shooting"—and for eight additional medium and heavy howitzers.

Lord Kitchener was unable to grant these requests.<sup>2</sup> Never-

<sup>1</sup> Lord Kitchener's intention, indeed, was that the fifth division—the 54th (East Anglian) Division T.F.—should merely be used to supply drafts for the other four.

<sup>2</sup> Eventually two 4.5-inch howitzer batteries, without teams, of the 10th

theless he agreed to scrape up an additional 2,000 rounds for Gallipoli, and eventually improved on this promise by rather more than double.

In the case of opposed landings, the immediate care of the wounded, and their conveyance from shore to ship, is a peculiarly difficult problem if the invading force does not at once succeed in freeing its base from shell-fire. Exceptional hardships in such a case are probably unavoidable, but Sir Ian Hamilton, with the memory of the landings on the 25th April indelibly printed on his mind, was determined that this time there should at least be no lack of medical personnel or stores, or of suitable ships for conveying the wounded to Egypt. On the 13th July, having divulged his general plan for the August offensive to the Director of Medical Services two days earlier, he telegraphed to the War Office:

It seems likely that during the first week of August we may have 80,000 rifles in the firing line, striving for a decisive result, and therefore certain that we shall then need more medical assistance. Quite impossible to foresee casualties, but suppose, for example, we suffered a loss of 20,000 men. It is not an extravagant proportion, when calculated on the basis of Dardanelles fighting up to date. . . . Such a battle would involve conversion of say 30 transports into temporary hospital ships, and necessitate something like 200 extra medical officers with R.A.M.C. personnel and nurses in proportion. . . . These should reach Mudros on 1st August . . . with medical and surgical equipment, drugs, and mattresses in due proportion.

The War Office promised to despatch 200 doctors and 100 nurses to Mudros, and a few days later, as the result of a second appeal, the number of nurses promised was increased to 300, or ten each for the 30 temporary hospital ships.

Just about this time, at the instance of the Admiralty, and in the hope of improving the organization of the sea-transport of wounded, Sir James Porter, a former Medical Director-General R.N., was appointed to the Expeditionary Force as Principal Hospital Transport Officer. In this appointment Sir James Porter arrived at Mudros on the 30th July, and proved, in the words of the Inspector-General of Communications, "a loyal colleague". In the short-time at his disposal before the beginning of the offensive he succeeded in making several changes for the better in the scheme for the sea-evacuation of the wounded. His plan, which left little to be desired in

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Division were sent, but they did not arrive at Mudros until 12th August and they landed at Suvla on the 16th.

clearness and exactitude, 'was to work the six available hospital ships in pairs at the three main beaches, so that one hospital ship could always be anchored off each beach. All wounded would be classified on board.' Lightly wounded would at once be transferred to trawlers moored to the opposite side of the ship, and taken thence to temporary hospital ships ("hospital carriers") at Imbros. Serious cases would be retained on board the hospital ship, which, when full to capacity, would be replaced by its relief and run straight to Mudros.

It had been decided to set the big offensive in motion as soon as possible after the last of the three New Army divisions had reached Mudros, but the choice of the actual date was governed by a factor outside human control. As already mentioned, large numbers of men and guns would have to be dribbled ashore at Anzac before the operations could start. It was vital to choose for that very secret undertaking a succession of moonless nights. Similarly the Suvla landing would call for a moonless night, or, better still, a night when the attacking troops could approach the coast in the dark but have the advantage of moonlight after getting ashore. With full moon due on the 27th July such an opportunity would offer itself in the first week of August and would not occur again for another month. This factor was decisive. Sir Ian Hamilton resolved to begin landing his reinforcements at Anzac on or about the 3rd August and to launch his attacks on the night of the 6th/7th, when the moon would rise about two hours after midnight.

The next step was the allocation of troops. For the attack on Sari Bair it was decided to reinforce General Birdwood with the 13th Division, one brigade of the 10th Division and the 29th Indian Brigade. The 11th Division was selected to carry out the Suvla landing, and its three brigades would be concentrated at Imbros beforehand and taken thence to Suvla. They would be reinforced next morning by the infantry of the 10th Division (less one brigade), which would arrive in small vessels from Mudros and Mitylene. The 53rd Division, the infantry of which was due to finish its concentration at Mudros on or about the 6th, would be in general reserve, and would probably be sent to Suvla in readiness for the second phase of the battle.

The Helles force was to receive none of the new units, and the southern garrison would thus consist of six tired and very weak divisions.<sup>1</sup> Its rôle would be defensive, but would include some feint attacks.

On the 17th July a series of tables was sent to the naval

<sup>1</sup> 29th, 42nd, 52nd, R.N.D., and the two French divisions.

Commander-in-Chief showing exactly what men, animals, vehicles and guns the navy would be required to put ashore on specified dates before the operations began. These requirements included the despatch of large reserves of food, ammunition and stores to Helles and Anzac before the 2nd August, in addition to the normal nightly delivery of 300 tons of stores for the existing garrisons. Incidentally it must be remembered that all stores arriving at the peninsula beaches had to be unloaded and carried ashore by hand. Five thousand Australian and New Zealand reinforcements were also to be landed at Anzac on the night of the 2nd August.

Sir Ian Hamilton had at first thought of attaching the 29th Division to the IX Corps to lead the attack at Suvla, for he felt that, despite the strain it had already undergone, it would be better able to carry out an opposed landing, and to push inland at night, than a division of new troops. In the light of after events there can be little doubt that Sir Ian Hamilton's first thoughts were right. But in the end other counsels prevailed. It was successfully argued by some of his staff that for troops who had undergone the terrific ordeals of the landings on the 25th April the strain of approaching a hostile coast a second time would be almost insupportable. The new divisions were highly spoken of; they had already undergone a longer training than had the Australians at the beginning of the campaign; and it was held that if, as firmly believed, no great opposition were offered at Suvla, they should be able to gain their objectives easily, despite their lack of experience. Further, it seemed an equally fair assumption that if, contrary to expectation, strong resistance were encountered at Suvla, a new division, led by Regular officers, would render as good an account of itself as a division which had been fighting continuously for three months and had lost the greater part of its best officers and men.

The three divisions which were now completing their concentration in the Ægean belonged to the First New Army, popularly known as "K1", and were all composed of splendid fighting material. Most of the men had enlisted in response to Lord Kitchener's first call for recruits in August 1914, and all the units had been training for ten months. Battalion commanders and adjutants and most of the company commanders were Regular officers; there was a large proportion of Regulars in the non-commissioned ranks; and the rank and file were the flower of British manhood. There was every reason to hope, therefore, that the divisions would prove themselves worthy successors of the old Army.

There can be little doubt, however, that there was a tendency at this time to rate too highly the advantage gained by the New Army divisions from the fact that all their senior officers were Regulars. Naturally enough, in view of the colossal expansion of the army in 1914, it had been no easy matter to find suitable candidates for all the higher appointments. Nevertheless the unimaginative system of selection had been to some extent to blame. Age and length of service had been the chief qualification for command, with the result that most of the brigade and battalion commanders were men well over fifty years of age who had retired before the war. Many of those now on their way to Gallipoli were to prove their worth as skilled and resourceful leaders. But some were men who would never have attained command in times of peace, and they lacked the power of inspiring the well-educated and enthusiastic young civilians who had flocked to the army at the first call to arms.

In some particulars the new divisions were bound to suffer, on first landing, a definite disadvantage. Their military knowledge—especially that of the younger officers—had not as yet become a second nature; and their work in England had scarcely prepared them for their first task on the peninsula—a hurried dash at night, across unreconnoitred country, to seize a range of hills. Success would depend even more than usual on resolute leadership, and on the initiative of junior leaders. And even in the case of the 29th Division in April, the younger officers had been deficient in this quality on their first day ashore. It is impossible, moreover, to exercise useful initiative without some knowledge of the plan of operation; and in this respect, as will now be shown, the 11th Division was severely handicapped.

Throughout the days of preparation, Sir Ian Hamilton insisted upon rigid secrecy, and no officer, however senior, was allowed to be told anything about the plans that it was not absolutely necessary for him to know. Even at G.H.Q. the majority of the staff were long kept in ignorance that a landing was to be made at Suvla, and all officers of the New Army divisions, on arriving at Mudros, were expressly ordered to avoid any discussion regarding the probable course of forthcoming operations, *even amongst themselves*. "The whole line of communications" this order ran "is infested with spies, and one incautious conversation may be worth 50,000 men to the enemy."

Turkish agents had so many chances of gaining information in Egypt and the Greek islands, and it was so vitally important to keep the British plan secret, that its careful guarding was essential; and as the Turks remained without a suspicion of

Sir Ian Hamilton's intentions till after the blow was struck, it may perhaps be urged that the extreme measures adopted were amply justified. But every idea has the defects of its own merits, and it is beyond argument that in many instances an all too rigid secrecy was a contributory cause of the initial failure at Suvla. On the night of the landing many of the officers of the 11th Division had never seen a map of the area in which they suddenly found themselves, and had little or no idea of what was required of them.

The question of the location of G.H.Q. in the opening phase of the offensive was another point upon which Sir Ian Hamilton's final decision differed from his original inclination. His first intention was to open a battle headquarters on the night of the 6th August either at Anzac, where the main blow was to be struck, or at Suvla. Finally he realized, however, that at neither of those places could he exercise an adequate control over the whole front of attack in addition to keeping in touch with the admiral, the I.G.C. at Mudros, and his own administrative services and departments. Imbros, on the other hand, was well situated for the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief. It was nearly equidistant from Helles, Anzac and Suvla; it could be connected with all three beaches by submarine cable; and with the aid of the destroyer placed at his disposal by the navy Sir Ian Hamilton would be able to reach any of his four corps commanders in less than an hour. From that island, indeed, all three fronts of attack, as well as the lines of communication, could be kept in equal focus.

It remains to notice the plan for feint attacks at Helles to assist the main offensive; and though a final decision on this point was not reached till the beginning of August, it will be more convenient to deal with the matter here.

Of the six divisions to remain at Helles in August, only the 29th, which had just been brought up to strength with drafts from home, was physically capable of any prolonged strain. Sickness was rife. The commander of the Royal Naval Division had called attention, for the second time, to the "utter exhaustion" of some of his units, and many battalions which had not served so long on the peninsula were in little better case. The French commander had also reported on the exhausted state of his troops, and it was plain that the French Colonials, though trustworthy enough in defence, could not be counted on for further offensive action. The four British divisions numbered only 26,000 rifles out of an establishment of 46,000. The two French divisions totalled 13,000 rifles between them.

By the latter end of July G.H.Q. had a shrewd idea that the

Turkish losses in the south had all been made good and that the Turkish positions were better organized than ever. In these circumstances they judged that nothing ambitious could be attempted in the way of feint attacks. It was vitally important to do everything possible to assist the Suvla-Anzac offensive, but the first essential was to ensure that the Helles garrison did not become too weak to hold its existing positions against any attack that the Turks were likely to deliver. It was estimated that starting with 13,000 rifles, the French corps, despite the high rate of normal wastage, could hold the line from the Straits to Kanlı Dere—about 2,600 yards—for at least a month without reinforcements. This would leave 4,400 yards of frontage to be held by the VIII Corps. On the same basis of calculation, 22,000 of the available 26,000 British rifles should be allotted for that front, and the balance of 4,000 rifles was held to represent the number of battle casualties which the VIII Corps could afford to lose in an offensive action to assist the main attack.

In accordance with these figures the French were ordered to take over the British line as far west as Kanlı Dere, and the problem now resolved itself into a crude calculation as to the best value that could be obtained for a battle-expenditure of not more than 4,000 men.

At G.H.Q. it was held that very little could be done at that price in the south unless the Turks should first beat themselves to pieces in an attack on the British line, or unless the fighting at Anzac compelled them to reduce their strength in the southern zone. The Helles command, however, was still tinged with a spirit of unconquerable optimism. One divisional commander informed corps headquarters that with the help of one extra brigade he would "hope to drive a wedge right through the Turkish main positions", and carry the British left to a point a thousand yards to the north of Krithia. The plan eventually sanctioned committed the VIII Corps to no more than an attack on a front of one mile to straighten out the re-entrant astride Kirte Dere. If this attack should be successful, and the casualty list not too heavy, an attempt might then be made to advance further.

Instructions to this effect were issued by G.H.Q., but it was now found that even for this modest objective there was not enough artillery. Finally it was decided that, as on the 12th July, the attack should be divided into two halves, one half to take place in the afternoon and the other the following morning.

In order to attract Turkish attention towards Helles it was at first intended to begin these operations on the 4th August—





*Crown Copyright.*

ACHI BABA FROM THE BRITISH HOSPITAL AT HELLES

*Imperial War Museum Photo.*

two days before the Suvla landing. But on the receipt of a report (which subsequently proved false) that large enemy forces were in reserve at Keshan, twenty miles north of Bulair and fifty from Suvla, this date was altered. It was of first importance that these reserves should not be ordered south till after the Suvla-Anzac attack had developed, and the Helles operations were consequently postponed to the 6th.

By the end of the third week in July the plan for the great offensive was nearly complete, and here it will be convenient to give a rough outline of its main features.

At Anzac, to distract the Turks from their right flank, and to induce them to hurry reserves to their left, General Birdwood was to begin his operations with an attack by Australian troops on the formidable Turkish position at Lone Pine. This attack, though primarily intended as a diversion, would actually be an important step on the way across to Kilia. It would be followed after nightfall by attacks on Turkish trenches slightly north of Lone Pine, and by the rushing of the Turkish outposts on the northern flank. These outposts guarded the entrances to the gullies up which the main advance would be made to the heights of Sari Bair. Their quick and silent capture was therefore of great importance, and success would depend on surprise.

As soon as the outposts had been captured the most important part of the whole attack would begin—the advance of the main assaulting columns to capture the heights of Hill 971, Hill Q and Chunuk Bair. It was calculated that these heights could be reached before dawn. A portion of the right assaulting column would then be directed right-handed down the main ridge to seize Battleship Hill and Baby 700, simultaneously with an assault on the Nek by other troops from the existing Anzac position on Russell's Top.

The principal obstacles to be surmounted at Anzac were the savage difficulty of the country in front of the main assaulting columns, and the lack of local water. But it was held that natural difficulties were less formidable than barbed wire flanked by machine guns, and that the problem of water supply could be solved by careful management.

For Suvla the 11th Division, amounting with signallers, engineers and medical services to a total of some 13,700 men, was to embark at Imbros in lighters and destroyers and to land to the south of Nibrunesi Point about 10 P.M., half an hour after the time fixed for the Anzac attack on the Turkish northern outposts. The objectives for this division had been worked out in detail. One battalion was to seize the outpost position on Lala Baba, and another to follow round the bay to rush the

enemy post near Suvla Point, and then to clear the crest of the Kiretch Tepe ridge. Other troops—it was hoped that two battalions would suffice—were to be sent against the Chocolate and W Hills, and a brigade was to be pushed rapidly across the Suvla plain to seize and piquet the Tekke Tepe ridge. Finally, if, as expected, all these objectives were gained by daylight on the 7th, and if General Birdwood's corps was in need of assistance, the two brigades of the 10th Division, arriving off Suvla at dawn, would be hurried straight to the Anafarta gap to threaten the right rear of any enemy forces still holding out in the neighbourhood of Hill 971.

The tactical plans for reaching the various objectives at Suvla were to be left to the IX Corps, but for reasons which must now be explained in detail, the corps commander was to be advised that in the opinion of G.H.Q. the Chocolate and W Hills should be approached by a long march round the Salt Lake and attacked on their northern side.

**Map 3.** A glance at the map will show that for troops disembarking south of Nibrunesi Point the shortest line of approach to these hills would be a direct advance south of the Salt Lake. But such an advance seemed to entail a night attack on unrequited trenches protected by wire, whereas the northern slopes of the hills were said to be undefended. An attack from the north, it was realized, would also be subject to certain disadvantages. It was still not known, for instance, whether the bed of the Salt Lake was as yet passable by infantry;<sup>1</sup> and in order to avoid the risk of becoming bogged it seemed that an attacking force, making for the northern slopes of the hills from south of Nibrunesi Point, ought to advance *via* Lala Baba and the spit—*i.e.* the route to be followed by the troops proceeding to Kiretch Tepe—and thence round the northern edge of the lake. This would entail a longer march, considerable delay, and the abandonment of any hope of surprising the garrison. An obvious alternative would be to land the troops inside the bay; but this course had been ruled out by the admiral. The choice seemed to lie, therefore, between a circuitous but comparatively easy march and a direct advance against a prepared position, and of these two alternatives G.H.Q. favoured the first. On a later page it will be seen that many of the evils which befell the 11th Division on the night of its landing can be traced to this advice. In point of fact the trenches on the southern slopes of the Chocolate Hills were little more formidable

<sup>1</sup> For fear of arousing Turkish suspicion frequent aerial reconnaissances were forbidden, and the existing air photographs were indeterminate. The landing of patrols to reconnoitre the lake was also forbidden.

able than those on the northern side. They were only protected by a few strands of rusty wire; their garrison had been ordered not to await an attack by large numbers; and a bold direct advance from the landing-place would probably have met with little opposition. Further, the Salt Lake was actually dry, and it would even have been possible to attack the hills from the north by advancing straight across it instead of marching round its northern edge.

Sir Ian Hamilton and his subordinates fully realized that the opening phase of the offensive bristled with difficulties. But every other alternative had presented greater hazards, and both at Anzac and at G.H.Q. the commanders were confident of success. Secrecy was the main essential; but provided this could be maintained till the first blow was struck, it was firmly believed that opposition would be slight; and success would then depend on rapidity of action. Procrastination would be fatal; but if all ranks pushed boldly forward the morning should find a vast change in the situation. With their line stretching from Lone Pine to Ejelmer the Anzac and IX Corps would be in possession of an extensive position overlooking the Narrows, with a sheltered base in rear at Suvla Bay. With the arrival of two more divisions, the second, and it was hoped the final, phase of the operations could then be set in motion—an advance to grip the waist of the peninsula and sever the Turkish communications by land as well as by sea.

It will be seen from this study of Sir Ian Hamilton's arrangements that his plan demanded for success that from first to last all should go with the exact precision of a clock: the exigencies of the situation did not allow of more than a very narrow margin for inevitable accident and normal human error. The Turkish army in Gallipoli, though necessarily scattered, was equal in numbers to the invaders, and the British Commander-in-Chief had no preponderance of strength for sustained offensive action. His one chance lay in surprise and in seizing a winning position before the enemy general could concentrate all his reserves to meet the blow. Command of the sea, coupled with good arrangements, would probably assure him of surprise. But surprise alone would be of little avail. A winning position could only be gained by determination and energy on the part of the leaders concerned, as soon as the troops were ashore.

When the August plan was settled and most of the arrangements had been made, the disturbing news arrived at G.H.Q. that the French Government were trying to persuade Lord

Kitchener that two of the three new British divisions should at once be landed on the Asiatic shore to silence the Turkish guns on the southern side of the Straits.

Ever since the arrival of German submarines, and the consequent restrictions imposed upon the use of the Allied battleships, the activity of these guns had been increasing. As early as the beginning of July at least eight batteries were enfilading the French right at ranges of little more than four miles. Against them the Allies could bring into action less than a dozen guns, and there was little doubt that until the arrival of British monitors the only real curb to the activity of the Turkish gunners would be their own shortage of shells.

This persistent shelling of the camps at Sedd el Bahr had produced so marked an effect on the morale of the French Colonial troops,<sup>1</sup> that a few days before he was wounded General Gouraud had changed his opinion of a fortnight earlier and suggested a subsidiary landing on the Asiatic shore. General Bailloud, who succeeded Gouraud, had taken the suggestion one step further by urging the French Government to insist that Sir Ian Hamilton should land two of his three new divisions in Asia,<sup>2</sup> adding that unless the fire of the Asiatic batteries could be silenced in the next fortnight it would mean "the material and moral ruin" of his corps.<sup>3</sup>

Sir Ian Hamilton, however, was not to be deflected from his main purpose by what he regarded as a temporary inconvenience, for he was confident that relief from the Asiatic shelling would automatically follow the success of his main plan. Even for two divisions, moreover—unless the Turks could first be persuaded by heavy attacks on the peninsula to weaken their garrison on the Asiatic shore—a landing on the southern side of the Straits would be a most difficult operation. Further, it would mean the abandonment of the main offensive, and the surrender of the initiative, in favour of a plan which General Gouraud himself had described on the 14th June as "a defensive measure that could not bring the Allies a step nearer to 'victory'".

But meanwhile the French agitation in favour of such a course had continued in Paris. On the 19th July General Gouraud wrote to the French War Minister from hospital, urging that "the very existence of the French corps is at stake"; the following day M. Millerand wrote to Lord Kitchener,

<sup>1</sup> Not the least serious event had been the destruction of several thousand bottles of wine by a single unlucky shell!

<sup>2</sup> He gave Sir Ian Hamilton a copy of the despatch on 4th July.

<sup>3</sup> French Official Account, Tome viii (1), Annexes i. No. 269.

pressing him to insist upon an Asiatic landing,<sup>1</sup> and Lord Kitchener now telegraphed for Sir Ian Hamilton's views. The latter replied promptly that he was utterly opposed to the scheme. "I am sure you will agree", he added, "that a diversion, if and when necessary, must be made at my own time, not at Bailloud's, to whom I have not yet confided my plans." Lord Kitchener did agree. He still trusted Sir Ian Hamilton, and determined that his scheme should not be handicapped by interference from home. "You will understand", he wrote to M. Millerand next day, "how difficult it is to impose upon a commander-in-chief an operation which does not fit in with his own most carefully prepared plan."

<sup>1</sup> French Official Account, Tome viii. (1), Annexes I. Nos. 284, 285.